

Sūrah 97

Al-Qadr

(Power)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The opening word, *al-qadr* is taken as this *Sūrah*'s title.

Period of Revelation

There is some divergence of opinion about whether this is a Makkan or Madīnan *Sūrah*. In his *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Abū Ḥayyān says that most Qur'ānic scholars regard it as Madīnan. 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī goes a step further in asserting that it was the first *Sūrah* to be revealed in Madīnah. On the contrary, al-Māwardī considers it as Makkan on the authority of many scholars. The same point is reiterated in Suyūṭī's *al-Itqān*. Ibn Marduwayh cites Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn al-Zubayr and 'Ā'ishah to the effect that it is a Makkan *Sūrah*. In the light of its contents it tends to be Makkan, a point elaborated in the explanatory notes that follow.

Subject Matter and Themes

Essentially, this *Sūrah* aims at making people aware of the significance and glory of the Qur'ān. The placement of this *Sūrah* next to *Sūrah al-'Alaq* signifies the interconnections between the two. While *Sūrah al-'Alaq* contains the first revelation, this *Sūrah* explains on which night of power the glorious Qur'ān was sent down and the significance of its revelation.

The opening verses declare that the Qur'ān has been revealed by Allah. In other words, it is not the product of the Prophet's mind; it is Allah Who is its Author.

It is further clarified that Allah sent it down on the night of power. As for the night of power, the phrase has two meanings, both of which are intended here: (1) It is the night on which fates are decided. In other words, it is not an ordinary night; man's fate is made or marred on this night. The revelation of the Qur'ān on this night does not represent any ordinary event; rather, it will change the destiny of the Quraysh, the Arabs, and of the whole world. The same truth is affirmed in Verse 3 of *Sūrah al-Dukhān*. (2) It is a blessed and glorious night, better than even a thousand months. The unbelieving Makkans are warned that the Qur'ān presented to them by the Prophet (peace be upon him) is foolishly rejected by them, which results in its bringing a curse for them, whereas its revelation was ordained on a night that is better than one thousand months in terms of its impact on mankind, and its usefulness. This point also features in *Sūrah al-Dukhān*.

On this night, the angels along with the Spirit descend by the permission of their Lord with all kinds of decrees. There is nothing but peace on that night until the rise of dawn. For Allah's decrees are for man's good and no evil is intended. Even if the destruction of a community is effected, it is for the overall good, not for any evil end.